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ABSTRACT

To assist language researchers in their analysis of interlanguage, some values for the linguistic variables of Source Language (SL), Interlanguage (IL), and Target Language (TL) are set forth. Although the fundamental assumption underlying interlanguage research is that interlanguages are linguistic systems, it is difficult to describe the systematicity because interlanguages are highly unstable. Since this change is brought about by exposure to the target language, descriptions of the systematicity of interlanguage based on interactional data are particularly problematical. In such descriptions, time, type of communication, and type of elicitation device must be considered. Interactional data must be examined because: (1) it represents one of the stylistic dimensions of interlanguage; (2) it is spontaneous, so it is of special interest since learners do not monitor their performance; (3) it is realistic since it is being used to meet learners' communicative needs; (4) it represents one of the only ways of analyzing related IL discourse rules; and (5) it is useful in studying resource expansion strategies and in elucidating the interrelationship between discourse structure and communication strategies. However, because of exact problems in description, the interactional data should be seen to represent a mini-diasystem rather than one individual system. (PMJ)

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DESCRIBING INTERLANGUAGE THROUGH INTERACTION: PROBLEMS OF SYSTEMATICITY AND PERMEABILITY*

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1. Linguistic variables in language learning studies

Research aimed at explanatory, rather than descriptive, adequacy is concerned with establishing the nature of interaction between two or more variables. In linguistically relevant research, one of these variables is necessarily linguistic, the other variable(s) being typically of a social or psychological nature. However, in quite a few cases more than one of the variables is in fact linguistic. This holds particularly true for research aimed at explaining how speakers of one language attain proficiency in another language. Within this area of research, which I shall refer to as 'language learning studies' (Færch 1978a), the variables normally incorporate the three following linguistic dimensions:

the learner's native or source language (SL)[1]

the target language (TL)

the learner's interlanguage (IL).

The usual procedure followed in trying to explain interaction between variables is to estimate correlations between different values of each of the variables. Hence it is crucial that each of the variables can in fact assume different values. Furthermore, a prerequisite for inferring a causal relationship between two variables which are found to correlate significantly with each other is partly that the variables are likely to interact, partly that the correlation is not the result of a third, uncontrolled variable. Let us consider how this applies to linguistic variables within language learning studies.

A linguistic variable is typically a linguistic system. Hence different values assumed by the variable represent different linguistic systems. In principle these systems can range from the most highly idealized description of a national language to descriptions

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of the performance of one individual in her native language in one specific situation. In practice, however, this is not the case as the values should be limited to those which are likely to interact with the other variable(s) with which it is correlated. Consequently, different criteria of relevance for values on linguistic variables can be established within different types of linguistically relevant research. Within language learning studies, the criterion of relevance is that the values chosen for each of the three linguistic variables SL, TL, and IL should be learner-related (cf. Slama-Cazacu 1971), i.e. values should be restricted to linguistic systems actually used by learners (SL/TL) or linguistic systems to which learners are in fact exposed (TL). Fig. 1 contains suggestions for values relevant to language learning studies for each of the three variables SL, IL and TL.

Source language (SL)	Interlanguage (IL)	Target language (TL)
Different languages as used by learners	Different stages of proficiency in IL	Different languages to which learners are exposed
Different varieties of language as used by learners: sociolects dialects stylistic varieties age-specific varieties sex-specific varieties etc.	Different varieties of IL as used by learners at one time in different situations	Different types of input to learners from same language

Fig.1: Some possible values for linguistic variables of relevance to language learning studies

Once the nature of each of the values has been established, we can proceed one step further to consider the question of how the variables are likely to interact with each other. Again, different criteria of relevance hold true for different types of research. As language learning studies aim at explaining how speakers of one language attain proficiency in another language, it is evident that the variable to be explained is the IL variable, i.e., the causal relations we are interested in are relations between SL and IL or between TL and IL, the IL variable being the one to be explained as affected by changing values within the SL

and TL variables. This presupposes that different values for the IL variable are known or, in other words, that we can identify different stages of proficiency in IL and different stylistic varieties of IL. Unfortunately, interlanguage studies have not reached this goal yet. In the following I want to discuss some of the reasons why the study of interlanguages presents the researcher with problems which are different in nature from the ones that confront the linguist when describing native languages.

2. The IL variable

As stated above, a linguistic variable is often to be identified with a linguistic system. This also holds true for the IL variable, although many researchers have commented on the problems inherent in extending a notion of systematicity, based on native languages, to interlanguages (see, e.g., Selinker, Swain, and Dumas 1975, Adjemian 1976, Tarone, Frauenfelder, and Selinker 1976, Corder 1978a, Hyltenstam 1978). The following is an attempt at pulling together what I consider to be the predominant present assumptions about IL systems:

(1) Learner language is a rule-governed system; consequently, (part of) learners' performance in IL is a realization of this IL system (Corder 1967, Selinker 1972, Adjemian 1976).

(2) The IL system becomes established through learning processes, the nature of which is a matter of considerable controversy (Dulay and Burt 1974, Taylor 1975, Adjemian 1976, Jordens 1977, Færch and Kasper 1979).

(3) Learners may extend the communicative potential (Færch 1978b) of their IL beyond the limits set by the IL system by using communication strategies (Varadi 1973, Tarone 1977, Corder 1978a, Palmberg 1979).

(4) Interlanguages are often situationally sensitive, for which reason variable, rather than categorical rules may be feasible in describing IL systems (Dickerson 1975, Dickerson and Dickerson 1977).

(5) Interlanguages are often unstable over time, moving towards the TL norm (Selinker 1972, Tarone, Frauenfelder, and Selinker 1976, Corder 1978a).

(6) The instability of IL systems is due to the permeability of the system (Adjemian 1975, and discussed in Selinker and Lamendella 1978).

The six characteristics of IL systems mentioned above have as consequences:

- that the researcher has to be highly aware of sociolinguistic variables in the data-collection phase (cf. Tarone 1979)

- that it is difficult to decide, on the basis of a sample of learners' IL text, which aspects of the performance should be considered realizations of IL rules and in which cases the performance is most likely a result of a communication strategy (Adjemian 1976)

- that it is difficult to describe IL systems in such a way that the instability of the system is preserved in the description (Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt "Pidgin-Deutsch" 1978, Hyltenstam 1978).

Given a solution to these problems, the researcher can proceed to consider the next problem, namely that of how to establish different values on the IL variable. Before we take a closer look at this problem, let us set up a sketch of standard IL methodology:

(1) Collect samples of learner language from a learner/group of learners at time X in situation Y.

(2) Describe rules and strategies governing the IL performance.

(3) Supplement if necessary with additional data (more IL texts, elicited data, introspective data).

(4) Repeat (1) - (3), changing either the time or the situational variable.

Basic to this approach is the assumption that a description of the learner's IL system as used at time X in situation Y can be made on the basis of a sample of data, and the assumption that two such descriptions can be taken to represent different values on the IL variable. Or put differently, it is assumed that one can produce descriptions of different states of IL, and that such descriptions can be taken to represent different IL systems. In my opinion, there are two fundamental problems connected with these assumptions:

(1) The inherent stability of an IL system over the period of time in which the IL data are collected depends crucially on the length of the period, the type of elicitation method used, and the type of communicative situation in which the learner engages.

(2) Before we have established how much variability is to be expected within one and the same IL system it is impossible to decide whether the difference found between two descriptions of IL is sufficiently large for the two descriptions to be descriptions of different IL systems.

As (2) is highly dependent on the outcome of (1), it is reasonable, with the present state of IL research, to give highest priority to solving the problem connected with describing individual stages of IL. The remainder of this article will be devoted to this problem.

3. The systematicity of IL systems

As mentioned above, one of the basic assumptions about IL is that it is a rule-governed system. Corder (1967) referred to "the system of the language that [the learner] is using (i.e. has learned) at a particular point in the course (and it must be repeated that he is using some system, although it is not yet the right system)". Similarly, Nemser (1971) described the 'approximative system' of the learner as "structurally organized, manifesting the order and cohesiveness of a system". And Adjemian (1976), in a discussion of systematicity vis-à-vis IL, says that "If ILs are natural languages ... then systematicity should only be taken to mean that there exists an internal consistency in the rule and feature system which makes up the IL. Like all human languages ILs must contain an organized set of rules and basic elements ...".

The specification of the systematicity of IL just cited is quite neutral with respect to two fundamental areas: variability and change. Thus Corder's formulation does not preclude the possibility of a variable system, nor does Nemser's description of the approximative system preclude the possibility of a gradually changing system. However, Nemser (1971) in particular is sometimes criticized for taking a too static view of IL (Corder 1978a, Hyltenstam 1978). As the relation between systematicity, variability and change is crucially important to interlanguage studies, it is worth considering this theoretical problem in some detail.

Sociolinguistic research has amply demonstrated the inadequacy of linguistic description incorporating traditional categorical rules only: language users typically employ different varieties of language in different situations, a fact which can only be captured by using situationally sensitive linguistic rules. Various suggestions as to how to implement the descriptive framework in this direction have been made, from Fries and Pike's suggestion of 'coexistent systems' (1949), through Weinreich's'diasystem' (1953) to Labov's 'variable rule system' (1970). But although linguistic descriptions, by containing variable rules, can capture the potential of the system for dynamism (leading to linguistic change), the description itself is static: the description predicts how the language user will behave verbally in a given communicative situation - it does not predict how the language user's system is likely to change.[2]

As already mentioned, learner language has been found to resemble native language with respect to situationally determined variability, and IL researchers have consequently adopted variable rules in descriptions of phonological variation (Dickerson 1975, Dickerson and Dickerson 1977).

Situationally sensitive variable rules are in fact traditional, context-sensitive categorical rules, with the context extended to

include aspects of the communicative situation. However, there are situations in which it is necessary to proceed one step further and employ rules of a non-categorical type, so-called 'probabilistic rules' (Suppes 1972). This is the case whenever each rule variant cannot be specified according to context / situation. Fig. 2 exemplifies the difference between categorical and probabilistic variable rules.

Variable rule (categorical):

$$X \Rightarrow \begin{cases} Y & \text{in communicative situation A} \\ Z & \text{in communicative situation B} \end{cases}$$

Variable rule (probabilistic):

$$X \Rightarrow \begin{cases} \left\{ \begin{matrix} Y & \text{with the probability of .6} \\ Z & \text{with the probability of .4} \end{matrix} \right\} & \text{in communicative situation A} \\ \left\{ \begin{matrix} Y & \text{with the probability of .9} \\ Z & \text{with the probability of .1} \end{matrix} \right\} & \text{in communicative situation B} \end{cases}$$

Fig. 2: Categorical and probabilistic variable rules

Probabilistic rules seem particularly suited for describing IL systems, in which correct TL forms may co-occur with IL specific forms (cf. Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt "Pidgin-Deutsch" 1978). However, by adopting probabilistic rules we reduce the explanatory adequacy of our linguistic description: to say that a given rule is likely to occur in 60% of the situations in which it could occur is no more than saying that we do not know how to characterize those 60% of all possible situations. For this reason the linguist will always attempt to refine the contextual / situational specification so that rules can be formulated categorically. One of the important issues within interlanguage studies is to what extent this can be done within descriptions of IL.

With native languages it is probably the case that the great majority of linguistic variation is utilized for communicative purposes, different varieties being used in different communicative situations. However, as the normal pattern for linguistic change is the gradual emergence of new forms, rather than a radical substitution of the new form for the old one, it is a likely condition for linguistic change to take effect not only that the language of the

individual be situationally varied but also that the rules used to describe these variants be probabilistic. It should be emphasized, however, that even if a linguistic system has to be described by means of probabilistic rules the system is still a static system, although potentially highly dynamic, as seen within a temporal perspective. Linguistic systems are by definition static - but they may be more or less prone to change.

So far I have focussed on the linguistic system of an individual language user at a specific point in time. In recent years, researchers have paid increasing attention to the development of IL, and have sometimes used the term system with reference to the continuum of developing IL competence (Bickerton 1975, Corder 1978a, Selinker and Lamendella 1978). When referring to the developing IL continuum as a 'system' the term is used in a radically different way from the way it is used in the preceding paragraphs, as the term no longer means "the system of the language that [the learner] is using (i.e. has learned) at a particular point..." (Corder 1967) but rather 'the sum of systems used by all learners' (cf. Hockett's 'overall pattern' (1958)). It follows that by proving that IL develops along a continuum one does not refute the systematicity of a language learners's IL at a particular point in time, any more than proving the opposite to be the case would refute the developmental continuum hypothesis: there is no necessary opposition between Nemser's formulation of approximative systems and Bickerton/Corder's formulation of dynamic system: the one focusses on the individual language user at a specific point in time, whereas the others focus on the development of IL competence over time.[3]

4. Problems of describing individual IL systems

In the preceding paragraphs I have argued that it is a fundamental assumption of the IL hypothesis that learners, when communicating in the second or foreign language, do so by means of a rule-governed IL system. Hence it follows that one can reasonably refer to the IL system used by learner X at time Y when communicating in situation Z. It is equally fundamental to the IL hypothesis that IL systems are typically highly unstable systems, i.e. prone to change. The basic problem of describing individual IL systems is therefore how to control those variables which lead to change.

Two necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for IL change are:

- system permeability (see above)
- exposure to TL (alternatively, exposure to varieties of TL-related IL, different from own variety).

The former condition is intimately connected with fossilization and has been subjected to careful analysis in a number of

recently published studies (Vigil and Oller 1976, Selinker and Lamendella 1978). As the problem of describing individual IL systems only exists in those cases where the systems are non-fossilized, the following discussion is relevant when dealing with permeable IL systems only.

It is evident that there are no natural stages of IL development - any more than there are natural stages in the diachronic (phylogenetic) change of a language.[4] Consequently the choice of which IL system to describe is either completely arbitrary or depends on a consideration of sociocultural variables. One of these is 'exposure to language'. Just as diachronic change presupposes interaction among the language users, it is difficult to imagine an IL system changing in isolation. However, IL change differs from diachronic (phylogenetic) change in general by being 'targeted' (Bickerton 1979), which enables us to distinguish between IL development (the IL approaching TL) and IL regression (the IL sliding back to previous stages of the IL system, cf. Selinker 1972). IL regression most likely differs fromIL development and diachronic (phylogenetic) change by being a product of lack of exposure. Very little research has been carried out with respect to IL regression, and the following discussion follows the main trend in interlanguage studies by focussing on situations in which IL change is likely to mean change along a developmental continuum (Corder 1978a) in the direction of TL. Hence exposure to TL (/IL) will be considered of crucial importance to the stability of IL systems.

Three factors were suggested above as important to consider in connection with a discussion of how to describe individual IL systems: period of time, type of elicitation, and type of communication. The reason why these factors are important is exactly that each of them poses its own problems with respect to TL exposure.

Period of time

Development being goal-related change over time, it is self-evident that one can reduce the likelihood for IL development to be reflected in one's IL data by collecting the data within a brief period of time. However, for reasons given above it is often necessary to collect fairly large samples of data: the potential stylistically-determined variation of IL calls for different types of data, just as the use of probabilistic rules in a linguistic description presupposes that items occur a reasonable number of times in a sample. It is therefore necessary to consider the time factor in slightly more detail.

As already mentioned, two of the determining factors in IL change are the permeability of the IL system and exposure to TL (/IL). Of these factors, only the amount of exposure to TL (/IL) can be controlled by the researcher.

A distinction can conveniently be made between 'research external' and 'research internal' exposure to TL (/IL). By 'research external' exposure is meant exposure to (and possibly interaction with) TL (/IL) outside the research situation, e.g. exposure through the media, education or social encounters. It is evident that the amount of research external exposure should be limited as much as possible during one data-collection phase[5], and to the extent it cannot be eliminated completely it should be controlled by careful analysis.

By 'research internal' exposure is meant exposure to (and possible interaction with) TL (/IL) as an integral part of the data elicitation. This factor will be taken up below.

The time factor may also influence learners' IL performance in a way which is unrelated to exposure, by improving the fluency of speech (automatization increasing through practice) and even by enabling learners to recall parts of the IL system which were inaccessible during the initial phase of IL production. The former point does not affect a description of the IL system. As regards the latter point, it is customary to ignore the first couple of minutes in spontaneously produced oral data as a 'warming-up' phase. It is possible, however, that the process of activating continuously larger portions of the IL system goes on for a longer period of time, but with the present state of ignorance it is impossible to determine whether this is an aspect of the time factor to take into serious consideration.

Type of elicitation

Elicitation techniques (including all techniques for obtaining IL texts, oral or written) are based on either verbal or non-verbal stimuli. Verbal techniques are either SL or TL based. As examples of TL based elicitation techniques can be mentioned cloze tests, dictation, elicited imitation and story retelling. Although there exists a theoretical possibility that exposure to TL through these techniques has some effect on the learner's IL system it is unlikely that this should be significant. Furthermore, it is a factor which is within the control of the researcher.

Type of communication

Elicitation techniques typically function within a stimulus - response framework: by being exposed to a given stimulus, learners are expected to respond in a way which will reveal to the researcher how their IL system is structured. This, from a communicative point of view, is clearly a very restricted type of communication, as it completely leaves out one of the basic elements of much of human communication: the possibility for feedback. But as soon as we collect our IL data in situations that allow for feedback, we are running a serious risk of the IL

beginning to develop. It is important to study IL through interaction (see below), but in so doing one may have to abandon the notion of systematicity outlined above. Hence I want to suggest that spontaneous interactional IL data may be fundamentally different from IL data without feedback: when analysing IL data without feedback, it is possible to control those variables which lead to IL development to such a degree that one can reasonably aim at describing one specific IL system. This is perhaps not the case with interactional data.

5. Analysis of interactional data

Interactional data

By interactional data is here meant data originating from a communicative situation in which two or more persons engage in minimally restrained oral interaction. By 'minimally restrained' is meant

- that none of the conversational partners is restrained by instruction from using specific types of discourse elements
- that the semantic and functional content, if specified by instruction, may be expanded by the interactants.

It follows that situations in which one person (the interviewer) is instructed beforehand not to employ e.g. repair turns fall outside the following discussion, as do situations which are rigidly structured from a semantic point of view.

Reasons for analysing interactional data

Before taking a closer look at some interactional data it is perhaps worthwhile to give some of the reasons why analysis of this type of data is essential to interlanguage studies.

(1) Interactional data represent one of the stylistic dimensions of interlanguages, and consequently analyses of such data are needed in order to present a comprehensive picture of the situationally determined variability of IL systems.

(2) Interactional data represent the most spontaneous variety of IL (cf. Tarone 1979 for a discussion of spontaneous data) - hence special interest is associated with such data because of the reduced possibility for learners to monitor their performance by reference to TL rules known explicitly.

(3) Interactional data represent IL used in one of the most realistic situations, according to foreign language users' communicative needs.

(4) Interactional data may shed light on how IL develops. One area to investigate would be how IL rules become established

through the use of communication and learning strategies (cf. Færch and Kasper 1979 for a discussion on this point). A related area to consider would be to what extent elements at lower linguistic levels are learned through elements at higher levels (morphology through syntax, syntax through discourse, cf. Hatch 1978a, b).

(5) Interactional data represent one of the only ways of analysing IL related discourse rules.

(6) Interactional data represent one of the best ways of studying resource expansion strategies (Corder 1978b). In IL performance without feedback the learner may utilize different message adjustment strategies, whereas in face-to-face communication the choice of topic is rarely left entirely at the discretion of one of the interactants, for which reason the learner may be forced to adopt more productive, 'risk-taking' (Corder 1978b) strategies.

(7) Only interactional data can shed light on the interrelationship between discourse structure and communication strategies (e.g. repair turns and specific types of communication strategies).

Problems of describing interactional data

The basic problem of describing interactional data has already been given above: IL systems change through exposure to TL (/IL), particularly through exposure including feedback, provided they are in a permeable state. As minimally restrained oral communicative situations provide ample opportunity for both exposure and feedback, it is at least theoretically possible that the IL system changes through the interaction. That this is likely to be the case, though to different degrees within different areas of the system, is suggested by an analysis of a 20-minute long video-taped conversation between a 17-year-old Danish girl (grade 10, fifth year of learning English) and a 17-year-old female native speaker of British English with a very limited knowledge of Danish.[6]

Lexis

The sample consists of 769 word tokens in the learner's performance, representing 203 word types. To see whether the type/token ratio changed during the interaction separate ratios were calculated for the first, the middle, and the last third of the sample. The differences found between the three ratios were negligible. This is hardly surprising as the conversation never moves back to a previous topic: hence the learner rarely gets a chance to use words 'learned' during the conversation.

Of the 203 word types used by the learner, 20 occurred as repetitions after the interviewer, 8 were Danish words used

consciously as a communication strategy (consciousness being indicated through the context or through extralinguistic behaviour), and 5 words were English words used erroneously. Purely quantitative analyses, like type/token ratios, completely obscure the fact that one tenth of the learner's word types were in fact words first suggested by the native speaker. Some of these were apparently known by the learner beforehand (passively only, perhaps). Others seemed to be repeated without being totally understood. And others, again, were later used correctly by the learner after having been explained by the native speaker indicating (short term, at least) learning. Hence the lexical part of the IL system analysed is highly fluctuating through interaction, but the extent to which this fluctuation represents genuine IL development can of course not be estimated on the basis of an analysis of one 20-minute-long text sample.

Grammar

I shall describe three instances of change in the learner's performance due to feedback from the native speaker.

(1) The learner's first turn is characterized by heavy use of parataxis. To the question of what she is going to do when she has finished school the learner replies:

"I'll start erm (sigh) er - I learn erm shirts and er (laugh) can't explain that"

The native speaker, in her next turn, uses verb + infinitival complement, and the learner replies:

"I will start - to learn - this you know - clothes".

(2) The learner is having problems with using he/she appropriately. As the passage in which the problem appears is of significant interest from the view of communication strategies and discourse analysis as well, I cite it in extenso. (Track 1: learner. Track 2: native speaker.)

1 yes I have one brother -
2 do you have any brothers or sisters -

1 she is erm - twotyfour (laugh) twenty-four
2 (laugh) oh twenty-four aha -

1 no not - yet - erm -
2 and er does er does she live at home

1 she -The - brother yer
2 right - is it your - brother - or -

1 start to
2 yes it's he yer . . . and er what does he study

1	live there - study
2	no what - does he study - in college -

1	oh er (laugh) she work not -
2	no what er what - er is his work -

1	yes no - she
2	oh you're er he does he doesn't work - isn't it -

1	- doesn't work (laugh)
2	(laugh) yer it's er - but er what what does he

1	mm er she er ↓he -
2	learn - or - (laugh) he (laugh) is your

1	(laugh) he buy er cars and lea and learn them - you know -
2	brother -

1	to do them better - bedre
2	

The learner is clearly aware of her problem and asks for the correct pronoun (↑he, ↑ indicating rising intonation). The native speaker does not provide the learner with the metalinguistic rule but tries first to establish the referent of the learner's utterance and then provide her with the grammatically correct way of referring to this referent. As is clear from the sample, the learner does 'learn' the rule from this implicit feedback, although she is having problems in using it productively.

(3) The learner apparently has not developed the correct rule for do insertion yet. However, when the native speaker corrects her she corrects herself with a laugh (cf. the extract above). This indicates that she knows the rule as a rule of TL but has not yet learned to use it productively.

Examples of IL users modifying their performance on grammatical points are frequent throughout the PIF corpus of interactional data. Thus one learner produces the form more old, which is corrected by the native speaker to older - leading to the IL form more older (which the learner repeats somewhat later during the same conversation). Similarly, the interviewer's "she speaks German to you?" leads to the learner's "yeah yes and I speaks German to her".

Again, we must emphasize that an IL grammar written on the basis of the learner's utterances and giving equal weight to

each utterance would obscure the facts

- that some correct utterances are merely repetitions of native speech

- that some incorrect utterances are induced by the native speaker and are, hopefully, nonce forms.

Phonology

The learner in question shows no sign of phonological modification. One explanation for this is that her interlocutor speaks standard British English, the norm she would be familiar with from the classroom. Other learners, when talking to American interviewers, do seem to modify their pronunciation of some of the more saliently American vowels. No detailed analysis of this area has been completed so far, however.

Discourse structure and communication strategy

One obvious hypothesis to consider would be that communication strategies differ in type as the interaction develops, learners becoming aware of which types of communication strategies are best suited for conveying the intended message. An analysis of communication strategies in the present sample offered no clear picture of this. However, other samples do seem to illustrate a movement away from SL based to TL based communication strategies, typically when the learner realizes at an early stage that SL based strategies, which would normally work in the classroom with teachers who are usually native speakers of Danish, do not necessarily work in communicative situations with native speakers of English with little or very limited knowledge of Danish. Clearly, more research about types of communication strategies and the interrelationship between discourse structure and communication strategies is needed before anything more conclusive can be said about developments in discourse and communication strategies within interactional data.

6. Concluding remarks

Although the analysis of one sample of IL used in interaction has been fragmentary and rather inconclusive with respect to the question of IL stability, it has highlighted the inadequacy of purely quantitative analysis. This is in accordance with Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker (1976), who write that "over-reliance upon numerical analysis can also obscure important patterns". I suggest that this is particularly true for interactional types of data.

The problem of IL permeability has not been extensively discussed in the present article, but it is evident that the more permeable the IL system, the greater the impact of TL on the system

during interaction. A cooperative communicative situation, a willingness to modify one's own system, and an acceptance of the other one's system as normative are probably some of the preconditions for system permeability. But there are no doubt numerous others in addition to these (cf. Selinker and Lamendella 1978).

It is possible that interactional data should be seen to represent a 'mini-diasystem' rather than one individual system. Because of its open-class character, the lexicon of IL systems is probably the part of the system most prone to change during interaction. That grammatical aspects of the system can also be influenced during the interaction has been demonstrated above. But given the closed character of the grammatical system it is highly possible that this is on the whole less prone to change than the lexical system. And similarly, it is likely that the segmental phonological system resists change most forcibly.

It may seem that the possibility for IL development during interaction with native TL speakers has been exaggerated. However, in situations in which we are dealing with foreign, rather than second language learners, and furthermore situations in which learners have little opportunity for practising their foreign language outside the classroom, we easily get to the point where the amount of TL exposure and interaction during a test session equals several weeks of TL exposure and interaction in the classroom.

With interactional data we are caught up in a dilemma: on the one hand it is possible to give a number of important reasons for including interactional data in the description of IL. But as progress in language learning research depends crucially on how successful IL researchers are in establishing different values on the IL variable, analysis of interactional data may in fact slow up this description of different developmental stages of IL. In my opinion, however, there can be no doubt whatsoever about the importance of analysing interactional data not only for IL research but also for language learning studies and foreign language pedagogy.

Footnotes

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1. This dimension is not restricted to the learner's native language, but also includes other languages, wholly or partially learned or acquired, and different from the IL in question.

2. This is not to say that predictions cannot be made on the basis of the description of the system by reference to a general theory of linguistic change. Such predictions, however, are predictions about types of systems.

3. Hence the criticism of Nemser, formulated by Hyltenstam (1978 pp. 5-6), is hardly tenable either. That it is difficult to state when an old system has been replaced by a new one is a situation which is comparable to that of dialectology, where it is frequently impossible to draw hard and fast boundaries between different dialect areas as isoglosses do not always overlap. In spite of this, we would refer to the language of individual speakers as "well defined and limited systems" (Hyltenstam 1978 p. 6).

4. This of course does not prevent analysts from establishing criteria for stages of linguistic development, as done for child language by Brown (1973) and for learner language by Selinker and Lamendella (1978). The only natural stage in connection with IL development would be that represented by TL, but unfortunately this, to most learners, is not a relevant stage.

5. In order to do so, data for the PIF project, Department of English, University of Copenhagen was collected from individual learners over two days, each learner spending 4 to 5 hours a day at the university. The project is supported by a grant from the Danish Research Council for the Humanities.

6. This is one of 126 video-taped conversations, recorded by the PIF project and constituting part of the project's IL corpus. See also note 5.

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